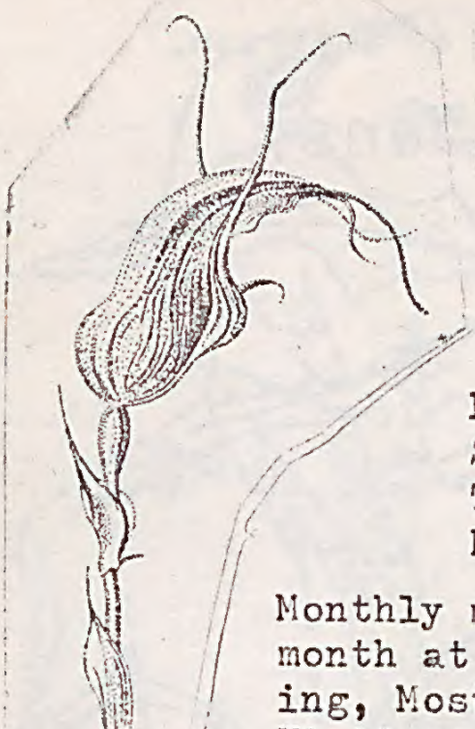


Castlemaine Naturalist

13
May '77

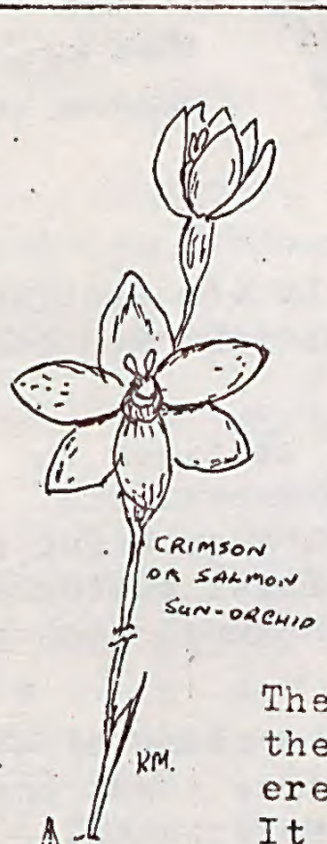
Pres: Mr R. Bradfield
Sec: Mrs R. Mills
Treas:Mr L. Bransgrove
News-sheet Ed: Mr E. Perkins.

Monthly meetings are held on the second Friday of each month at the Castlemaine Education Centre (SEC building, Mostyn Street) at 8 p.m.
Visitors and prospective members are invited to attend the club's sessions.

Orchids of the Castlemaine District No.8 of a series by R. Mills

THE CRIMSON SUN-ORCHID

(Thelymitra macmillanii)



The faintly perfumed flowers of this rather rare orchid vary considerably from salmon pink to crimson. One outstanding 3 flowered specimen from Maldon, noted in W.H.Nicholls book "Orchids of Australia" was noted as being rose-pink with salmon tips. The columns were purplish.

The only specimen I ever saw was at Muckleford North, and was a strong crimson, the column wings yellow. From reports it appears that this single specimen has formed a small colony.

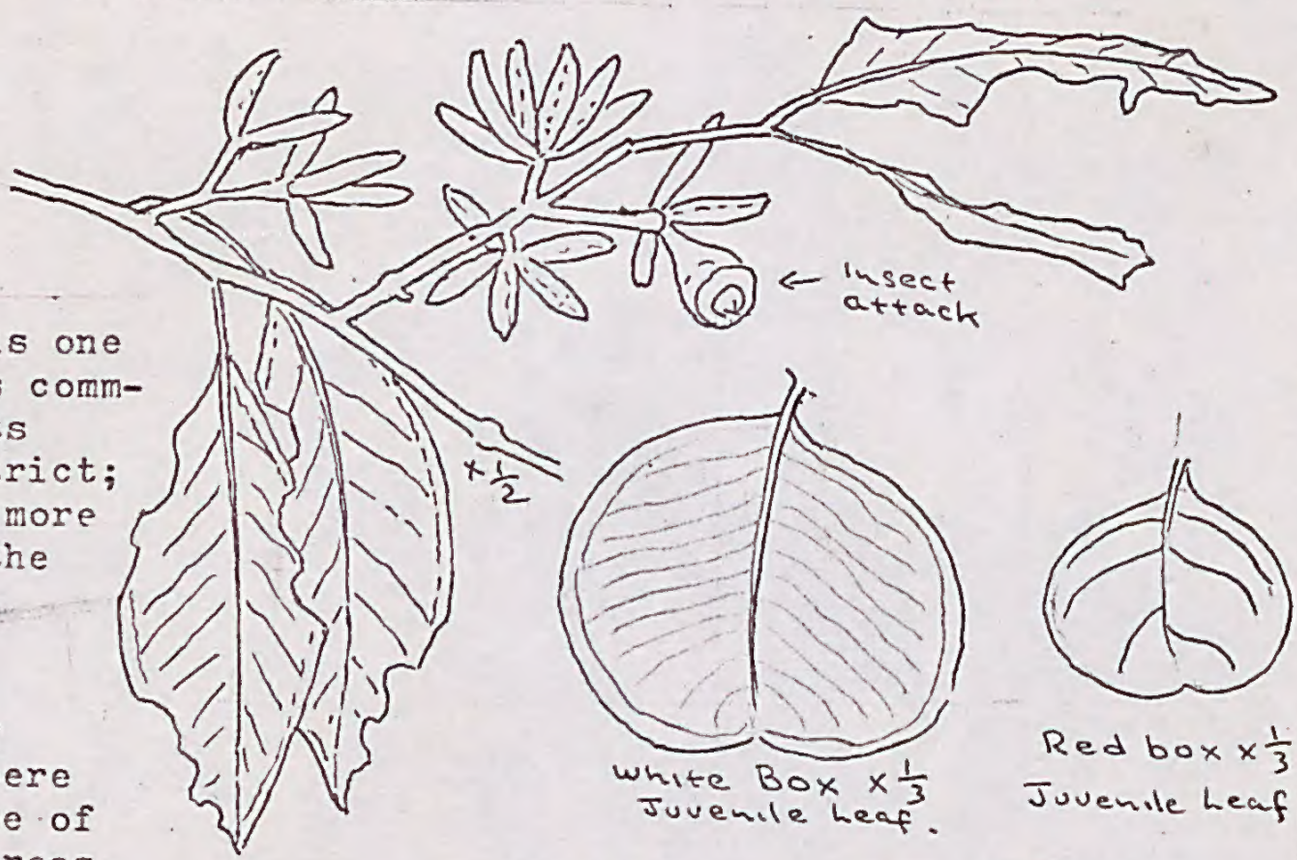
The slender flexuose stem is 20-30 cm high, and in the specimen drawn, reddish in color. The leaf is erect, narrow linear and channelled.
It blooms during September and October.

1861.

We learn from the Argus that a blackbird is now building ts nest in the Botanical Gardens, and the process is being regarded with considerable interest by those who are anxious for the acclimatisation of this glorious songster of the English woods. (contr.by R.Bradfield

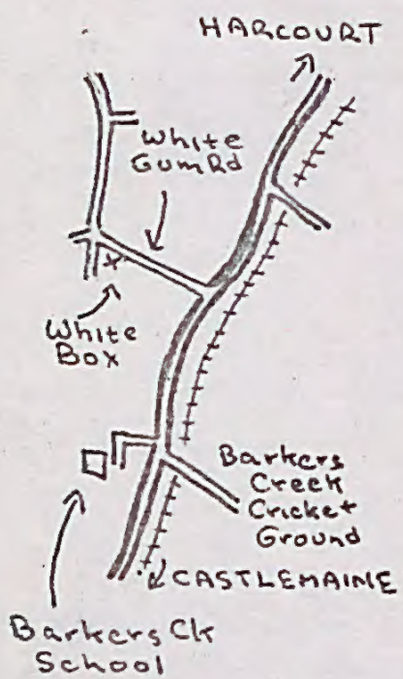
(Emblem: Autumn Greenhood, Pterostylis revoluta. Drawn by G.Sitch)

WHITE BOX (Eucalyptus albens)



White box is one of the less common eucalypts of the district; it is much more common to the north-east, e.g in the Broken and Ovens river valleys. There it is a tree of low-lying areas. In NSW however it is a tree of the low hills.

Like most eucalypts, it is most easily recognised by its distinctive juvenile leaves, which are large, round and whitish. Red box has similar, but much smaller juvenile leaves.



White box is a suitable name, at times the whole tree has a whitish appearance. The buds are quite ornamental with a covering of white powder; there is a beautiful photograph of this in the Breeden book "Natural History of S.E. Australia".

The map shows the position of a clump of white box at Barkers Creek. Information about the location of others would be appreciated.

The scientific name also refers to its colour, albens meaning white.

THE LITTLE STINT

A First for Australia

(Reprinted from The Bird Observer', Mar 1977)

"A Little Stint was, after a three-week presence, identified by Fred Smith and friends on 22 January, 1977 on the MMBW farm at Werribee. The Little Stint, a Northern Hemisphere bird, was in breeding plumage."

(from Gould League "Survival")

Meet the Birds in Your Garden
Number 4 in a series by Ray Wallace

THE RED WATTLE BIRD

One of the most typical sounds in the local bushland is the raucous voice of the Red Wattlebird, the largest of our mainland honeyeaters. Wild, harsh and yet to me, nothing is more pleasurable than to have the blue sky above you, the sun of early morning reflecting from the white trunks of the yellow gums and all around the wild melody of the Red Wattlebird calling as they feast on some rich harvest of nectar.

Nectar, and at times, domestic fruit are its staple diet. Common visitors to native gardens, they are particularly fond of the nectar from the flowers from many eucalypts, banksias and Callistemons and will feed happily and noisily for hours if a garden has any of the above in a full flush of blossom.

Thirteen inches in length, the Red Wattlebirds movements are often sinuous and snake-like, reminding us of the fact that the class Aves evolved from reptilian forbears millions of years ago. Coloured sombrely, the upper parts are dull brown streaked with white, with the wings darker. Underparts are paler, also streaked with white and the lower breast and abdomen is yellow. Behind the eye is a small pinkish-red wattle which gives the species its common name.

The two close relatives, the Little Wattlebird and the Yellow Wattlebird are not found in the district. The Yellow Wattlebird Australia's largest, is endemic to Tasmania.

The nest of the Red Wattlebird is a relatively tidy affair made of thin sticks and lined warmly at the bottom of the cup with bark strips, wool and feathers. On this cradle repose the two or three attractive pinkish eggs which are spotted with brown, purple and grey spots, these often form a zone at the larger end. An uneasy flier, the Red Wattlebird never seems to be able to maintain an even rhythm when in flight. Game and pugnacious, they along with other honeyeaters will often harass Magpies or birds of prey into leaving an area for the sake of quietude.

Busy and bossy, all of the smaller honeyeaters make room for the Red Wattlebird on feeder or shrub, and keep a respectful distance from their querulous cousin.

(Reprinted from Bendigo Region SGAP Newsletter, with permission)

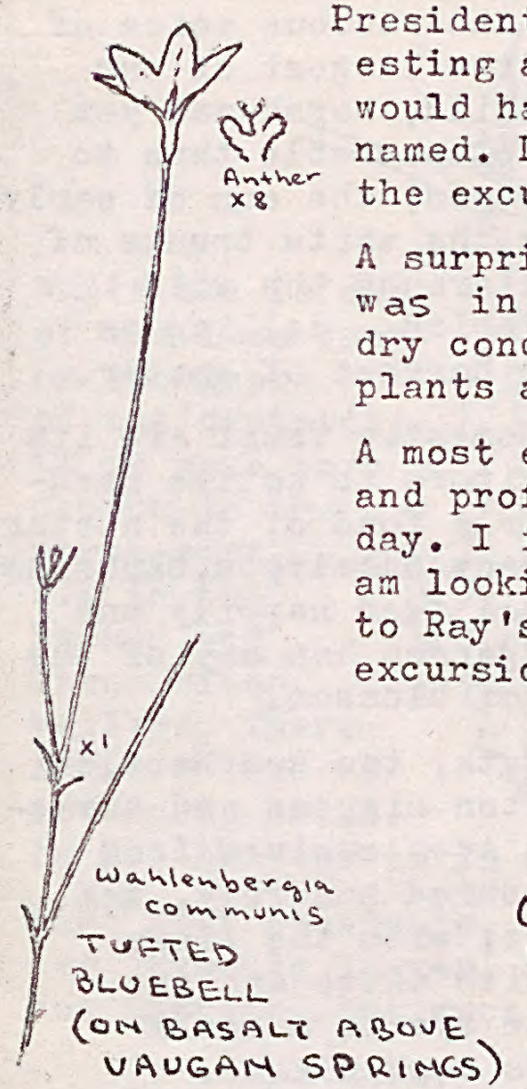
A WALK IN THE VAUGHAN DISTRICT

On April 17, 29 visitors and visitors started on the six bushman-mile walking tour of the Vaughan - Glenluce area, led by President Ray. It is an interesting area; few other parts would have each hill and gully named. Details are set out in the excursion notes.

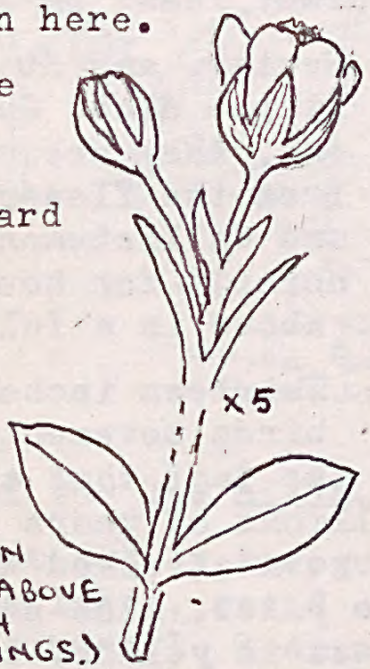
A surprising number of plants was in flower, despite the dry conditions. A few of the plants are shown here.

A most enjoyable and profitable day. I for one, am looking forward to Ray's 1978 excursion.

E.P.

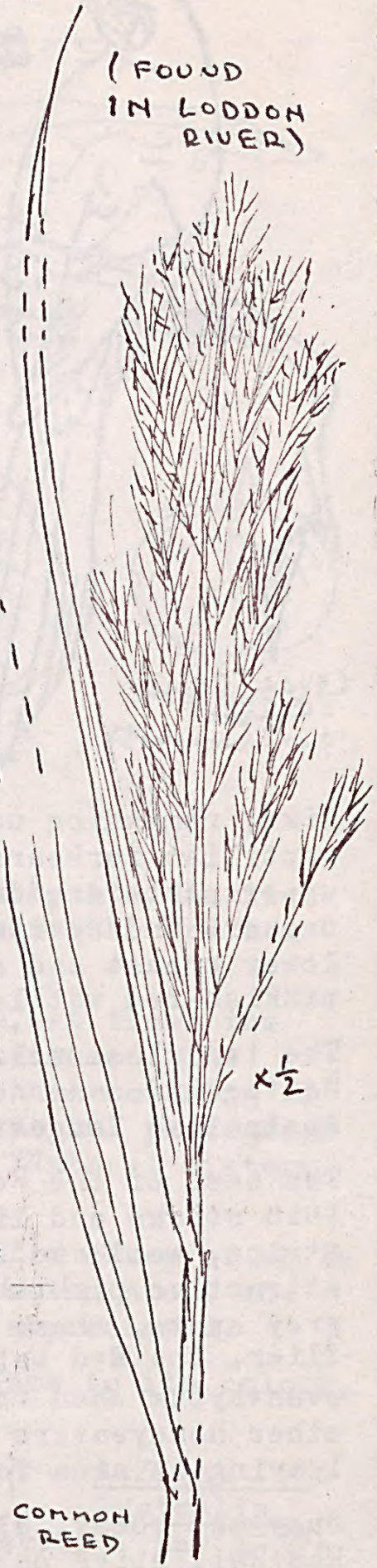


Wahlenbergia communis
TUFTED BLUEBELL
(ON BASALT ABOVE VAUGAN SPRINGS)



(FOUND ON BASALT ABOVE VAUGHAN SPRINGS.)

Hypericum graminium

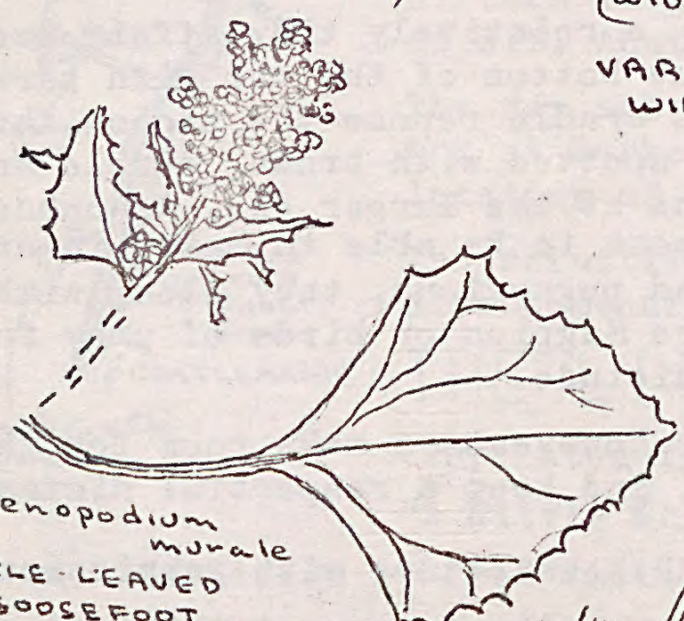


(FOUND IN LODDON RIVER)

COMMON REED

Phragmites communis (=P australis)

(VAUGHAN - ROADSIDE)



Chenopodium murale
NETTLE-LEAVED GOOSEFOOT

(WIDESPREAD)

VARIABLE WILLOW-HERB

Epilobium cinereum

11/4/77

SNAKES ALIVE - OH

Recently I became aware that snakes are protected by the Conservation Authority in NSW, and there is a penalty of $400 if caught killing this reptile. Because of this protection they are multiplying almost as fast as rabbits. Although I'm all for conservation I think it is time that this law was now revoked before the snake takes priority over the safety of children.

While staying with my family in NSW, my son's largest tally in less than three days was eight snakes, all near the home. The creek, a spring and rambling blackberry bushes (now removed) make this locality an ideal habitat for the snake.

Children, although briefed on the dangers, soon forget all they are taught while chasing balls that have gone over the fence. On such an occasion my grandson yelled, "Joe Blake" so his father grabbed the long-handled shovel (always kept at the ready) and leapt the fence. When he landed, another snake slid over his boots- result, two snakes dispatched.

After being told of the law, my son hastened to warn the children not to tell their mates about the dead snakes. They were told just to"keep it under their hats", but not knowing this old saying, they took the warning literally and didn't think much of that idea.

Should you go boating down the Murray River, remember you are not allowed to hit snakes with your oars, as the Murray waters belong to NSW.

When is a snake dead? In "The Sun" recently, a lady reported killing a snake by chopping off its head a few inches from the head. Thinking of her little dog's safety she went to brush the head portion away and was bitten on the finger. On reaching the hospital it was found that she had been envenomised.

On my next visit to NSW I will be accompanied by my rubber boots!

(Reprinted from the Maryborough FNC News letter with permission)

HOW MUCH DETERGENT?

The Australian Consumers Association recently tested household detergents. They found that the quantities recommended on packets are often excessive and that washing is equally good with much reduced quantities (say half). Readers may care to experiment and report back. This could be a good way to cut pollution, save national resources and save money.

SKINKS, SLATERS AND EARWIGS.

Skinks (small lizards) have been reported to be unusually numerous in Castlemaine this year; and slaters and earwigs less plentiful. Is this common throughout the town? Are the two related? Observations from readers are asked for.

MARS

Some results of the Viking landings on Mars

Rocks are red-orange in color, probably due to a coating of iron oxide. Composition is similar to that of chondritic meteorites. The soil is unlike any simple or abundant soil on the earth.

Daily temperature ranges from -85°C to -30°C.

Atmosphere is 95% carbon dioxide, 2.3% nitogen and less than ½% oxygen (compared with earth's 78% nitogen, 21% oxygen and 3/100 per cent carbon dioxide). Wind gusts up to 40 m.p.h (19 m/sec) have been recorded. Sky is a pink color.

Life Soil analysis can detect carbon (essential for earth's life) to a few parts per billion. None was detected. This compares with more than 1000 parts per billion for Antarctic soil

Book Review

THE PHYSIOGRAPHY OF VICTORIA

by E. Sherbon Hills (Witcombe and Tombs)

Professor Hills' book has long been a classic, describing the Victorian landscape and the geological processes that caused this landscape. I have the 1946 edition; I do not know of a similar book as comprehensive and with a minimum of jargon. The 1975 edition is however, almost double in size and even more comprehensive. Unfortunately there is an increased use of technical words.

It does not deal with minerals or fossils. Local areas are not prominent. Despite this, in the locality index, Castlemaine gets 3 entries, Daylesford 6, Guildford 2, Harcourt 2, Loddon River 4, Maldon 2, Mt Alexander 1, Mt Franklin 2, Mt Tarrangower 2 and Muckleford 1. Illustrations are numerous, photographs and diagrams would average more than one per page. Photos include the Lyttleton St anticline and a syncline from Little Bendigo.

In the introduction, we are told that the book has been written "for persons who might be interested to explore the countryside and interpret its features for themselves!" If you are such a person you should have this book.

E.P.

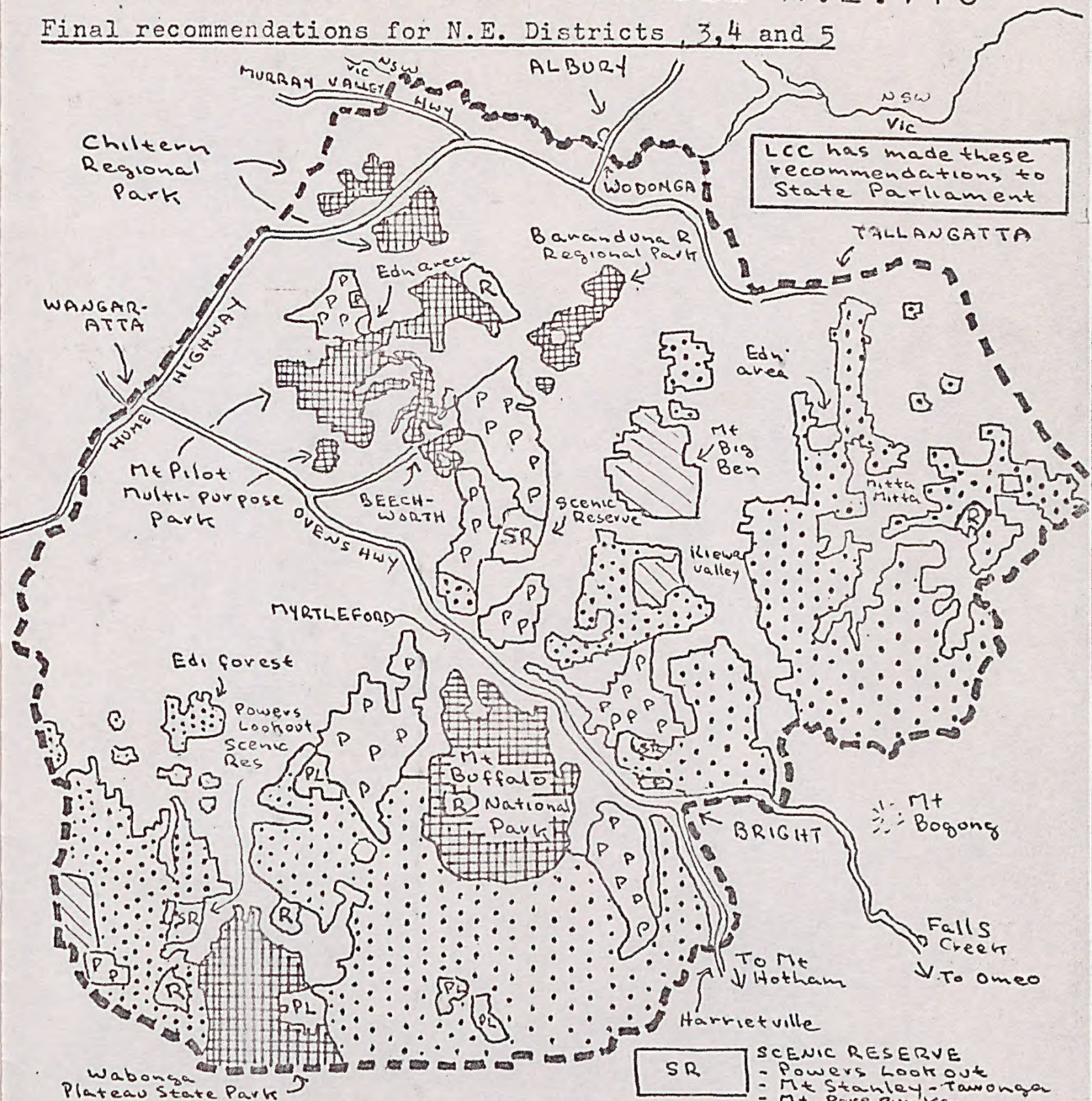
LIBRARY ADDITIONS

Ecos 11 (the CSIRO magazine)has been added to the club library. Articles include Emerging Role for the Resources Satellite, Burning Question in the Snowy, Keeping Tabs on our Birds, Air outback, and Growing Native Grasses in Urban Parks.
Also added to the library are the first two 1977 issues of the Victorian Naturalist.

(Members of the Education Centre may also borrow from the Ed. Centre library. This is open at club meetings)

LAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL N.E. Vic

Final recommendations for N.E. Districts, 3, 4 and 5



(Note: Map is much simplified. Full details are available)

CLUB PROGRAM

May Meeting Friday May 13
Members night. Members are asked to contribute items if possible.

Special May Meeting Tues May 17
Joint meeting with the Camera Club. They will be showing PHOTOFLORA 76, a selection of nature slides. Sections are Victorian Wilflowers, Australian Wildflowers, In the Bush with a Camera, Birds, Orchids. 8 p.m at the Education Centre.

June Meeting Friday June 10
Speaker: Mr B. Singleton
Subject: Japanese gardens

July meeting Friday July 8
Speaker: Mr E. Wilkinson
Subject: Geology

FROM THE COMMITTEE

Visit of Mr A. Perry Mr Perry is President of the VFNC and a member of the Creswick FNC, and attended the April committee meeting. We will have a joint excursion in November.

Subscriptions
Family: $5
Single: $3
Student/Junior:: $1

Next Committee Meeting Thurs May 26

EXCURSIONS

Sat May 21 Kyneton,
Leave Ed Centre at 1.00. Leader is Mr Winterbottom.
(Note changed venue)

Sat June 11 Koala Park
Leave Ed. Centre at 1.00
Leader: Mr Winterbottom

July Excursion: Mt Tarrangower.

Oct 8-9 Grampians Campout

Sun Nov 6 Mt Beckworth; joint excursion with Creswick F.N.C.

NAME TAGS

In response to a suggestion that we wear name tags at meetings, Mr Bransgrove has obtained a quantity of cardboard discs and will add names to these. They will be available at the door at future meetings.

FINANCIAL

Accounts were & exc.

March & April Mag.	$8.00
Name tags, pins and a a rubber stamp	$9.09
Exc. notes	$1.50
Loddon/Camp notes	.60
WVFNC affiliation	$5.00
Balance	$52.55

CAMPOUT PROPOSED FOR APRIL, 1978

The Club has been approached by the VFNCA (Victorian Field Naturalists Clubs Association) and by the WVFNCA (Western Victorian Field Naturalists Clubs Association, and asked to organise a camp out and meeting in 1978. The VFNCA would require the Labour Day weekend. At this time motels and camping grounds in the district are likely to be full. Accordingly, the committee suggests that we offer to organise a campout for the WVFNCA for a weekend in April. Suggested venues are Vaughan caravan park and the Guildford or Fryerstown Halls. We would need to provide excursions for Saturday afternoon, and for Sunday; possibly also for Saturday morning. We would also need to provide a hall for the meeting in the evening, and arrange a program and also supper (tea and biscuits). Hot water for Sunday lunch time could also be provided. At a later stage we could consider a VFNCA campout, possibly centred at Maldon.